



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 2, 2004

CONTACT:
MICHELLE MOWERY JOHNSON
615-313-4707 (OFFICE)
615-272-0845 (PAGER)

TRANSPORTATION INSPECTIONS EXPOSE DEFICIENCIES STATEWIDE

PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED, REMEDIED BEFORE CHILDREN HARMED

NASHVILLE-- The Tennessee Department of Human Services recently wrapped up its annual summer transportation inspections of child care agencies across the state. More than one hundred agencies were cited for violations that ranged from no transportation training to leaving children unattended in vehicles. This number represents only nine percent of all child care agencies that offer transportation in Tennessee.

Child care licensing staff conducted more than 700 visits from June 14 through August 6. During that time, 15 agencies voluntarily suspended their licenses to transport after critical violations were revealed, including children not being buckled into their seats, no transportation logs and leaving a child behind at the agency after taking other children on a field trip. Nearly 100 agencies were "Put on Notice" for violations that included no vehicle inspections, incomplete logs and no second walk-through inspection of the vehicle. After agencies are cited, licensing staff conduct intensive follow-up visits and training to ensure that the violations are corrected.

"The inspection process works both to identify and prevent problems," said Human Services Commissioner Virginia T. Lodge. "It's troubling when we find violations, especially since these rules have been on the books for several years. However, providers seem to be getting the message that they cannot take this high-risk venture lightly. We can't take any chances when it comes to the health and safety of Tennessee's children."

Across the country, a record 42 children died after being trapped in hot vehicles in 2003. Since 1997, four Memphis children have lost their lives after being forgotten in their child care vans.

Human Services licenses 3,700 child care agencies in Tennessee, and one third of them offer transportation. Of these, nearly 60 percent, or 800 agencies, provide transportation to and from home and school. The rest of the agencies only provide transportation to and from the agency and the child's school. With the start of the new school year, Human Services licensing staff started concentrating their efforts on child care agencies offering school-to-agency transportation, reviewing policies and monitoring procedures for these 500 providers.

If you witness a child being left unattended in a child care vehicle, dial 911 for immediate assistance. For other transportation safety violations, please call the Human Services Child Care Complaint Hotline at 1-800-462-8261--that's 1-800-GO2VAN1 (Go to the back of the van and check the children--it's the number one priority). For more information on child care licensing, visit <http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/childcare.htm>.

###

CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37248
615.313.4700